

## **Kentucky's HANDS**

*A crying baby. A frantic young mother alone with her fretful baby. Who can she turn to for help?* HANDS may be the answer for her. Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) is a new voluntary home health visiting program for Kentucky's new parents and their babies. The goal of HANDS is to build upon parents' strengths to improve the health and development of babies.

HANDS is part of Governor Paul Patton's Early Childhood Initiative, KIDS NOW, passed by the 2000 General Assembly. It is being underwritten by the Kentucky tobacco settlement and Medicaid funds.

As many as 10,000 babies are born in Kentucky every year to first-time parents. Many of these parents will be ready to accept the new responsibilities of their roles. Others, however, may face burdens of everyday life that will affect how they are able to care for their new baby. HANDS offers new families a place to turn for help to become the best parents possible.

The burdens often associated with staying in school, finding employment, caring for the baby, assuring well-child visits in the first years of life, and making sure the child is immunized on time--all are activities for which the new parent may need a helping hand.

### **Background:**

Issues of poor health behaviors, high teen pregnancy rates, substance abuse (including tobacco use), lack of preparation for child rearing, and lack of knowledge of the health care system and how to access it appear to be common in many communities across the country. Kentucky's HANDS is a voluntary home visiting program that seeks to address these challenges.

### **HANDS Home Visitors:**

Kentucky's HANDS home visitors may be registered nurses, social workers, and child development specialists, as well as trained paraprofessionals. Following weeklong training with follow-up training throughout the year, the professional staff visit pregnant women and their babies in first-time families in their homes.

**HANDS Strategies:**

- Families are the primary decision-makers for their children
- All families have strengths
- Families are responsible for their children
- Positive pregnancy outcomes make for healthier babies
- Prevention and early intervention improve a child's well being
- Nurturing children aids their growth and development
- All children can succeed
- Children live in healthy safe homes

Any first-time parent is eligible for home visitation services. There are no income guidelines and no charge for the service. For more information about HANDS, contact your health care provider or local health department. May 3, 2001

**HANDS**

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